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Communication and Incentives Fuel Successful State Wellness Program

For over 25 years, the state of Kansas has been providing a wellness program for its employees. Since its inception in 1988, The State of Kansas Employee Health Plan (SEHP) HealthQuest wellness program has evolved over the years to become a comprehensive wellness program offered to all benefit-eligible government employees in Kansas.

The wellness program has a dedicated mission to partner with employees to improve their well-being while better managing health costs, and through the innovative work of Jennifer Flory, Senior Manager, Health Plan Operations, and her team, the program has continually improved its performance throughout its history.

With dependents included, the state's health plan now covers more than 80,000 lives, and HealthQuest has become an integral component of the state's health plan, earning a number of awards and accolades. In 2013, HealthQuest was recognized for innovative measures to increase the number of state employees taking an active role in their health awareness and improvement.

The wellness program, powered by Alere, a leading provider of personal health support solutions, has proven to generate significant cost savings while empowering state employees to take control of their health.

The most significant measure contributing to the success was the introduction of a rewards program that gives employees the opportunity to earn a \$480 annual premium discount by earning points via participation in various wellness activities throughout the year. The inclusion of the premium incentive discount reward for the 2012 annual program year significantly increased participation from 22 percent to 75 percent. For this success, the SEHP earned the top post in the Recognition and Rewards category of the 2013 Edington Next Practice Award.

A significant factor in the success of the HealthQuest wellness program — in addition to the generous incentives — is the social component. Through the Wellness Champions network, success stories program and social media participation, Flory and her team have captured the important social aspect of engaging employees in wellness.

The Wellness Champions are state employees who volunteer to spread the HealthQuest message to their peers. HealthQuest hosts monthly webinars as an opportunity for the Wellness Champions to learn from each other, share their own stories and best practices and inspire creativity through the “health promotion spotlight” which allows champions to share initiatives that have been successful at their own location.

The webinars not only provide champions with information and resources to help them promote wellness but also empower the Wellness Champions to be creative and develop their leadership skills.

HealthQuest also asks for success stories from participants to recognize employees for positive progress and health improvement as well as share the stories with all members to motivate and encourage change.

The program collects participant success stories through word-of-mouth as well as through a form located on the online portal. HealthQuest assertively seeks opportunities to share these stories with the population through various communication channels to promote the benefits of the resources available.

With the rise in mobile technology, Flory and her team also recognize social media as another way to make an impact on the population and use these tools to make the program fun, accessible, supportive and social. HealthQuest expanded beyond email and newsletter communications to include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and a blog site to spread tips and information for health and wellness.

Other innovative communication strategies include tweeting testimonial quotes by participants and including success stories in welcome packages mailed to new employees. Success stories are shared on the HealthQuest page of the SEHP website; in newsletters created by assorted employee groups for their respective teams; on HealthQuest communication materials and via email.

By supporting the HealthQuest wellness program through effective, original communication methods, strong social components and a well-tailored incentives program, Flory has helped make wellness a priority for employees of the state of Kansas. **HC**

Company:

State of Kansas

Headquarters: Topeka, Kan.

Website: www.kdheks.gov

Nature of Business:

State government

Number of Employees:

80,000+ (Dependents included)

Key Solution Provider:

Alere